

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9152

INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY COLOMBO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 7649

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PFOR, EG, SY, IN, MPOL

SUBJ: INDIAN FOREIGN MINISTER VISITS CAIRO AND DAMASCUS

REFS: A. CAIRO 5418 (NOTAL) B. NEW DELHI 7372 (NOTAL)

SUMMARY: INDIA SEES FOREIGN MINISTER CHAVAN'S VISIT TO CAIRO AS PART OF ITS EFFORT TO MAINTAIN GOOD RELATIONS WITH EGYPT IN THE ABSENCE OF STRONG TRADE OR OTHER TIES. THE EGYPTIANS SEEMED INTERESTED IN INDIAN (AND YUGOSLAV) SUPPORT AGAINST ALGERIA IN ARAB AND NON-ALIGNED COUNCILS. THEY MENTIONED POSSIBLE INDIAN PARTICIPATION IN A GENEVA CONFERENCE TOWARDS THE END OF THE YEAR. INDIA APPEARS MORE INTERESTED IN COLLABORATION WITH EGYPT ON MILITARY PRODUCTION THAN ON NUCLEAR TECHNOLOGY. THE VISIT TO SYRIA WAS AT INDIAN INITIATIVE AND IS PORTRAYED HERE AS LESS IMPORTANT, CONFIDENTIAL

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ALTHOUGH INDIA WAS FAVORABLY IMPRESSED WITH POSSIBILITIES FOR

ECONOMIC COOPERATION WITH SYRIA. END SUMMARY.

1. MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS DIRECTOR FOR WEST ASIA
KHALEELI BRIEFED EMBASSY OFFICERS JUNE 9 ON FOREIGN MINISTER
CHAVAN'S VISIT TO CAIRO MAY 27-30 AND TO DAMASCUS MAY 30-
JUNE 1. KHALEELI, WHO ACCOMPANIED CHAVAN, PUT THE VISIT IN THE
CONTEXT OF CHAVAN'S EFFORTS SINCE HE BECAME FOREIGN MINISTER
LAST YEAR TO VISIT A NUMBER OF COUNTRIES IMPORTANT TO INDIA.
EGYPT HAD ISSUED AN INVITATION; INDIA ASKED FOR THE VISIT TO
SYRIA TO "BLANACE" THAT TO EGYPT AND THE ORIGINALLY PROPOSED
STOP IN BEIRUT (CANCELED BECAUSE OF THE DISTURBANCES THERE).

2. POLITICAL: THE IMPORTANCE OF INDO-EGYPTIAN RELATIONSHIP
HAS DECLINED AS EGYPT HAS TURNED TO THE WEST AND AS INDIA HAS
DEVELOPED ITS RELATIONS WITH THE ARAB STATES OF THE PERSIAN
GULF. THE INDIAN AND EGYPTIAN ECONOMIES ARE NOT COMPLEMENTARY,
AND WHAT LITTLE TRADE THERE WAS HAD DWINDLED AS INDIA HAS STOPPED
IMPORT OF LONG-STAPEL COTTON. THUS, ACCORDING TO KHALEELI, THE
PROBLEM IS ONE OF MAINTAINING IN THE ABSENCE OF ECONOMIC TIES
WHAT HAS BEEN A CLOSE RELATIONSHIP. INDIA STILL FINDS EGYPT THE
EASIEST OF THE ARAB STATES TO TALK TO -- LESS IDEOLOGICAL AND
MORE PRACTICAL. IN CAIRO, THE TWO SIDES SPENT MORE TIME
DISCUSSING NON-ALIGNMENT AND RELATIONS WITH THE GREAT
POWERS THAN THEY DID THE ARAB-ISRAEL AND INDO-PAK PROBLEMS.
(THE INDIANS GOT THE IMPRESSION THAT THE EGYPTIAN SHIFT
TOWARD THE WEST RESULTS NOT ONLY FROM UNHAPPINESS WITH SOVIET
MILITARY SUPPLY FROM THE ADVANTAGES WHICH US GOOD OFFICES
MAY BRING IN DEALING WITH ISRAEL, BUT ALSO FROM THE HOPE OF
GREATER ECONOMIC BENEFIT FROM COLLABORATION WITH THE WEST.)
EGYPT APPEARED INTERESTED IN USING THE OLD NON-ALIGNED TIE
WITH INDIA (AND WITH YUGOSLAVIA) TO STRENGTHEN ITS
POSITIONS VIS-A-VIS ALGERIA ON ARAB-ISRAEL AND NON-ALIGNED
QUESTIONS. EGYPT IS NOT LOOKING TOWARD ANYTHING INSTITUTIONAL-
IZED BUT SIMPLY INFORMAL MEETINGS. THE EGYPTIANS DID RAISE
INDIAN PARTICIPATION AT THE GENEVA CONFERENCE, WHICH THEY
TALKED ABOUT AS POSSIBLY BEING HELD TOWARD THE END OF THE
YEAR. ACCORDING TO KHALEELI, INDIA SAID IT WOULD GO ONLY IF
THE CO-CHAIRMAN AND ISRAEL AGREE. BOTH EGYPT AND SYRIA
URGED INDIA TO AGREE TO INCLUDE IN THE COMMUNIQUE AN ENDORSE-
MENT OF PALESTINIAN PRESENCE AT GENEVA. INDIA DECLINED ON THE
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GROUND THAT TOO MANY PEOPLE WERE SAYING WHAT THE PALESTINIANS
SHOULD DO.

3. MILITARY PRODUCTION COOPERATION: CHAVAN TOLD THE PRESS
IN CAIRO THAT HE AND PRESIDENT SADAT CONSIDERED NEW AREAS OF
COOPERATION, INCLUDING DEFENSE PRODUCTION, AND THAT AN EGYPTIAN
TEAM WOULD VISIT INDIA TO EXPLORE THE POSSIBILITIES OF SUCH
PRODUCTION. ACCORDING TO KHALEELI, THIS WAS NOT DISCUSSED

IN ANY DETAIL. THE EGYPTIANS CANCELED PLANNED CALL ON THEIR DEFENSE MINISTER. KHALEELI CONTINUES TO BELIEVE THAT THE SCOPE FOR SUCH COOPERATION IS LIMITED. INDIA DOES NOT WANT TO JEOPARDIZE ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE SOVIET UNION BY GIVING AN IMPRESSION IT IS TRYING TO EVEN PARTIALLY SUPPLANT THE SOVIETS IN EGYPT. (ALSO, MUCH OF THE INDIAN PRODUCTION IS UNDER VARIOUS LICENSES, INCLUDING SOVIET.) BUT THE EGYPTIAN TEAM WILL COME, AND IT MAY FIND AREAS IN WHICH INDIA MAY BE ABLE TO HELP TECHNOLOGICALLY AS EGYPT MOVES AWAY FROM SOVIET MILITARY SUPPLY TOWARD WESTERN MILITARY SUPPLY. INDIA RELIES ON BRITISH, FRENCH AND SOVIET SOURCES AS WELL AS PRODUCING SUBSTANTIAL QUANTITIES OF MILITARY EQUIPMENT DOMESTICALLY. (WE WOULD NOT, AS AN EXAMPLE, THAT INDIA IS UPGUNNING ITS SOVIET T-55 TANKS TO 105MM, AND COULD CONCEIVABLY ASSIST THE EGYPTIANS TO DO THE SAME.)

4. NUCLEAR COOPERATION: KHALEELI SAID THAT INDIA PROPOSED INCLUSION OF THE PARAGRAPH ON THE IMPORTANCE OF HARNESSING NUCLEAR ENERGY FOR PEACEFUL PURPOSES . (NEW DELHI 7372). THIS HAS BECOME ALMOST STANDARD IN COMMUNIQUE FOLLOWING INDIAN MEETINGS WITH OTHER NON-ALIGNED COUNTRIES. ITS PURPOSE IS TO ENDORSE IN A VAGUE MANNER THE INDIAN NUCLEAR EXPLOSION. THERE WAS NO DISCUSSION WITH THE EGYPTIANS OF NUCLEAR COOPERATION DURING THE VISIT. INDIA ALREADY HAS AN "UMBRELLA" TYPE AGREEMENT WITH EGYPT ON NUCLEAR COOPERATION, THE SAME TYPE WHICH INDIA HAS WITH ANUMBER OF COUNTRIES AND UNDER WHICH IT SOMETIMES SUPPLIES TRAINING. KHALEELI THOUGHT THE PRESS HAD BLOWN THE MENTION OF NUCLEAR COOPERATION OUT OF PROPORTION. (TWO PROMINENT JOURNALISTS HAVE MADE THE SAME POINT IN COLUMNS IN THE LAST FEW DAYS, UNDOUBTEDLY AT OFFICIAL URGING.) INDIA PROPOSED THE SAME LANGUAGE FOR THE COMMUNIQUE WITH SYRIA, BUT THE SYRIANS BALKED BECAUSE THEY CONFIDENTIAL

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SAID IT WOULD ONLY ENCOURAGE ISRAEL TO EXPLODE A NUCLEAR DEVICE.

5. ECONOMIC RELATIONS: INDIA WAS RELIEVED THAT THE EGYPTIANS DID NOT RAISE BILATERAL TRADE. NOT ONLY HAS INDIA STOPPED BUYING EGYPTIAN COTTON, BUT IT WILL PROBABLY EXPORT SOME LONG-STAPLE COTTON ITSELF THIS YEAR. THE TWO SIDES DISCUSS POSSIBLE ECONOMIC COLLABORATION, ALTHOUGH KHALEELI DOUBTS THAT THERE IS MUCH SCOPE FOR THIS.

6. SYRIA: THE INDIANS FOUND THE SYRIANS MORE WRAPPED UP IN THE ARAB-ISRAEL PROBLEM AND IN GENERAL MORE IDEOLOGICAL AND LESS FLEXIBLE. THE HIGH-LEVEL ECONOMIC SPECIALIST ACCOMPANYING THE FOREIGN MINISTER HAD A FULL SCHEDULE, HOWEVER, AND CAME AWAY ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT THE PROSPECTS FOR INDO-

SYRIAN COLLABORATION IF ONLY MONEY CAN BE FOUND TO FINANCE
THE PROJECTS. INDIA CAN OFFER EXPERTISE AS WELL AS SOME
TECHNOLOGY AND EQUIPMENT -- WHICH IS IN GREATER DEMAND IN
SYRIA THAN IN EGYPT.
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